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FM AMCONSUL SHENYANG
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8725
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 0727
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0182
RHMFIS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC 0134
RUCGEVC/Joint STAFF WASHDC 0094
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0149

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000090

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/CM, EAP/K, INR
MOSCOW PASS TO VLADIVOSTOK

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION
TAGS: CH ECON KN KS PGOV PREF PREL RS
SUBJECT: PRC-DPRK BORDER: QUIET REFUGEE FRONT, LOCAL AID
UNIMPEDED, PUST SPUTTERS ALONG

REF: A. SHENYANG 76
1B. 06 SHENYANG 1184
1C. SHENYANG 39

Classified By: Consul General Stephen B. Wickman. Reasons 1.4(b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In the aftermath of the DPRK's detainment of two American journalists, China's increased security posture along the border (Ref A) does not seem to have translated into increased pressure on illegal border-crossers from the DPRK. Amcits working for non-U.S. projects in Rason and other areas far from Pyongyang are still residing in the DPRK, while U.S.-connected aid operations run out of Yanji continue to distribute food. The Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST) will not be opening anytime soon. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Congenoff and assistant visited the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture May 13-17 to record developments along the PRC-DPRK border o the Tumen River. Anecdotal observation of economic activity at Nanping/Musan, Songhakri, Yuson, Sanhe/Hoeryong, Kaishantun/Sambong, and Tumen/Namyang is reported septel.

QUIET REFUGEE FRONT: NO CHINESE BACKLASH, FEWER PEOPLE

13. (C) Asked if increased Chinese security presence along the border after the capture of two American journalists on March 17 had also increased Chinese scrutiny of North Korean border-crossers, long-standing consulate contacts uniformly reported they had not witnessed any changes in the Chinese security posture since mid-March.

One missionary's wife commented that security at tourist sites such as the Tumen/Namyang bridge crossing was more restrictive but, along with others, said she had neither heard any rumors nor seen any evidence of the roundup or harassment of DPRK border-crossers. She added that even the Olympics crackdown at the time was not particularly directed at defectors, but rather at everyone. Regardless of nationality or field of work, Americans, South Koreans, and Sino-Korean offered similar assessments (NOTE: The only hints of a potential recent crackdown, which we have been unable to corroborate, were some early April reports from South Korea-based NGOs and organizations, such as NKnet and Free NK Radio.)

14. (C) In a trend that dates back over half a decade (Ref B) contacts commented that the flow of border-crossers, has dwindled to such a low level that even possibly increased Chinese scrutiny was less a factor than it might appear to be. Father Lian Changyuan of the Yanji Catholic Church reported that ten years ago one could almost find one defector living with every family in Yanji. He said he dreaded wearing his collar because groups of several border crossers would run up to him on the street seeking aid that he was not in a position to offer. Now, Father Lian says he wears his collar freely. While he knows of a

handful of border-crossers from the past who have settled in Yanji, fewer and fewer are choosing to stay in the prefecture. If newcomers do arrive, they quickly move on to other parts of China. Lian speculated that North Korean border guards and internal security guards were simply becoming more successful in stopping would-be border-crossers before ever getting to the border. Lian did not sense any change in the Chinese security posture vis-`-vis border-crossers in the last couple months and that any possible increase in security was the result of a gradual change over the last decade and the latest Olympics crackdown.

¶ 15. (C) Pastor Jin Guangshu of the Yanji Pingan Church said that the flow of border-crossers had been reduced to a trickle. When pressed, Jin said he did not sense any new pressure from the local Public Security Bureau (PSB) and nothing related to the detainment of the American journalists. Jin also cited the belief that North Korean security apparatuses and border guards were now better-fed and now more bribe-proof, stopping border-crossers inland or along the Tumen River before they reached China. Jin surmised that most of the people in North Korea with the appetite or need to defect had already done so, evidenced by those repeat border-crossers who still managed to escape even after refoulement. Jin classified these people as those with the personality and temperament willing to take on such risks, along with those individuals escaping real problems and issues.

LOCAL AID UNIMPEDED: PROJECTS ONGOING

¶ 16. (C) Yanbian University of Science and Technology (YUST) Professor Sang Hoon Lee is in charge of YUST's food distribution network in North Korea. Lee accompanies groups to the border, where some of YUST's Sino-Korean staff takes the food across the border and directly distributes it in cooperation with the local authorities. Lee has been in China for over a decade and said that the border areas immediately

SHENYANG 00000090 002 OF 002

adjacent to the Tumen River and Pyongyang were now doing comparatively well. He said the greatest need was in those areas far from Pyongyang yet unable to access the border. Lee was focusing on the southern part of North Hamgyeong province at the invitation of the provincial and municipal DPRK officials.

¶ 17. (C) YUST's Dean of International Academic Affairs Norma Nichols commented that the various aid programs and economic development programs were still running as normal. While YUST continued to be unsuccessful in getting a permanent staff presence at their orphanage in Rason, Nichols said that there were several Americans working and living in the DPRK, including a few families who were permanently stationed in Rason with their dependents. These individuals were all working on behalf of Australian- or European-led projects, such as goat farms and yogurt plants. Professor Taeik James Min said that he was running a soybean paste/soy milk plant in Rason that supplied these products to locals and exported the rest to South Korean church groups to generate revenue to reinvest in plant operations. Min's plant stores some product for each Busan-bound ship that departs Rason. Upon arrival in Busan, the Korean Customs Service has an agreement to stamp the product origin as "Korea."

PUST UPDATE: REALITY SETS IN, GOING NOWHERE SOON

¶ 18. (C) YUST Vice President David Kim admitted that after further negotiations with the North Koreans, it was clear that even the most optimistic opening date for the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST) would have to be pushed back to sometime in late 2010 (Ref C.) Looking back upon the rejection of South Korean instructors at the facility, Kim attributed North Korea's increasingly strident stance against PUST as a reflection of worsening North-South ties and the conservative Lee Myung-bak government's hard-line stance since its inauguration in February 2008. While he had recently received notification from the North Korean Ministry of Education that he would receive an official, press-focused "opening announcement" slated for sometime within the next few months, Kim believed the DPRK had agreed to do this simply to overcome the appearance that YUST was losing steam in face and to show current and future donors that the project was not completely failed.

¶ 19. (C) Kim forecast continuingly unfavorable conditions as the DPRK government stuck to the line that PUST could not open until every singl

last building on the master plan was completed and ready for business, citing an old story involving an angry Kim Il-sung and a half-finished university campus. Construction of all of the main buildings was long complete, but PUST had never planned on completing every single peripheral building on the master plan, so without factoring in more DPRK intransigence, just the construction alone would add a significant delay. As for delays involving the export of American computers, Kim admitted that the request for a Commerce Department license was more about money than anything else: PUST had received a sizeable in-kind OKO"">>>60 donation of controlled, American computers. Kim said that he was exploring how to procure Chinese computers instead. With donations at an all-time low and other roadblocks in the way, he said PUST had been hoping that the licensing issue could be resolved.

¶10. (C) YUST President Chin Kyung Kim was as ebullient and energetic as ever. He spoke excitedly about his credentials, upcoming plans for PUST, and his "excellent" relationships with everybody, including the local government, the DPRK government, ROK President Lee Myung-bak, etc. Dean Nichols, however, evinced concern that the North Korean Ministry of Education had intentionally signed a contract with Chin Kyung Kim as an individual citizen and not with PUST as a whole or an organization. Nichols said that the YUST contract with the Chinese Ministry of Education was also written in this fashion and could pose a legal crisis were President Kim to end his involvement with the operation. President Kim dismissed these concerns and said that the contract was between his foundation and the North Koreans (NOTE: A close read of the contract in some PUST promotional materials that are no longer circulated but that were passed to congenoff would seem to validate Dean Nichols' concerns.)

WICKMAN